

Scripture for November 9, 2008

Reflection from John Surette, SJ

God's Building

Today is the feast of the “Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome.” It was originally built by Emperor Constantine in the 4th century and has been rebuilt several times since then. For over a millennium it was the official residence of the Popes. In our 21st century the Lateran Basilica is Pope Benedict’s cathedral church. It is where he sits as the Bishop of Rome.

Why are we celebrating this feast? It might seem strange to some that our worship today is being focused on a building, on a human structure made of stone. Such a focus seems rather unimportant when compared to so many persons and events of much greater magnitude and importance to which our attention might be drawn on this Sunday morning.

Buildings, however, can be important. In our first reading this morning from the Book of Ezekiel (47: 1-2, 8-9), the Prophet has a vision of the temple in Jerusalem, a building made of stone. In his vision there is a stream of water emanating from the temple building that flows to the east and becomes a mighty river that transforms the land. Its easterly flow is symbolically important as east is the direction of dawn,



A temple building is a place that is a dwelling place of Divinity. It is a place that reveals a sacred reality.

At this very moment the Divine Spirit dwells within you and within me. As such each of us is a place that reveals a sacred reality. We are temples of the Spirit and the stream of water that emanate from us is the love and justice that we give to each other and to all the other

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creatures. If we include all of the people planet wide who are practicing love and justice, who are entering into and nurturing authentic relationships, the stream becomes a mighty river that is bringing about the dawn of a new age and is transforming the land.

Yes, buildings are important. In the first verse of today's second reading (1 Corinthians 3:9) we read: "Brothers and Sisters, You are God's building."

Have you ever thought of yourself or experienced yourself as God's building? As God's building each of us is a place that houses Divinity...houses Divinity!

We frequently sing the hymn "Amazing Grace" that tells us that we are saved wretches, but how often do we think of ourselves as creatures who house Divinity? Such a thought sounds strange to some. Others feel that they are heretics just to say such a thing. Our truth, yours and mine, is that we are God's building and therefore house Divinity and we need to embrace and celebrate this truth.

Jesus understood and experienced himself as housing Divinity and we Catholics refer to him as an Incarnation with a large "I". Each of us in the chapel this morning can understand and experience ourselves as housing Divinity and can refer to ourselves as incarnations with a small "i".

We humans, of course, are not the only creatures that house Divinity. God's Spirit resides within all of Creation and so everything that participates in the great Mystery of Existence is also God's building and is an incarnation with a small "i". Ancient peoples had and present day indigenous peoples seem to have a sense of this. In us modern industrial people this sense seems to have atrophied.

We need to recover this sense because in this 21st century we are laying waste to the building that is God's Creation. We are diminishing and destroying that building that houses Divinity.

So, once again, we are God's building. In the deepest place within ourselves we need to embrace and celebrate this truth...this saving truth. Alleluia!

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